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Integration in the St. Louis Public Schools was smooth and almost without incident. The St. Louis community itself had been experiencing a process of democratization over a period of ten years before the Supreme Court decision; examples show integration of churches, desegregation of the St. Louis University, and desegregation of hotels and theatres. Public schools had become increasingly integrated in the performance of their professional duties and the operation of their professional organizations. A third factor was the city-wide human relations program conducted on a scientific basis and under expert leadership.

The plan for integration that the St. Louis School Board adopted provided for integration of colleges and of special schools and classes in September 1954. All high schools under the Board's control, with the exception of technical high schools and the adult education program, were integrated at the beginning of the second semester, January 31, 1955. Integration of technical high schools and of regular elementary schools began in September of 1955. The plan further stipulated that tenure rights of certified employees would be preserved; that, whenever possible, employees would retain their present assignments; that when vacancies occurred employees would be assigned to fill them on the basis of competence; and that teachers would be appointed from a single rated list on the basis of examination scores.

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# THE ST. LOUIS STORY

## The Integration of A Public School System

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ST. LOUIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS
INSTRUCTION DEPARTMENT
FEBRUARY, 1955

Office of Education-EEOP
Research and Materials Branch

Bennett O. Stalvey

## FOREWORD

Since immediately after the Supreme Court of the United States handed down its historic opinions of May 17, 1954, our office has received inquiries from all sections of the country as to what the Board of Education is planning and doing relative to desegregation of the schools under its control. Most of these inquiries have come from educators in other systems, from professional associations or committees concerned with educational problems, from graduate students of education, and from organizations interested in more or less related social problems.

In order to answer as factually as possible the questions more frequently raised and to share and exchange the essence of our experience in integration with others who, like us, are seeking to comply with the edict of our highest court, we have prepared this resumé of how our Board of Education has planned to bring about the transition and what has thus far been accomplished towards this end. It is, in broad outline, the St. Louis story of progress in the integration of its public schools. We trust that it will give those inquiring a general concept of what is in process here with respect to implementation of the Supreme Court's decision.

PHILIP J. HICKEY
Superintendent of Instruction
St. Louis, Missouri

# THE SAINT LOUIS STORY

## THE INTEGRATION OF A PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

### I. The Supreme Court Renders Its Decision of May 17, 1954.

On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court of the United States declared unanimously and unequivocally that racial segregation in public education is in violation of the American Constitution. In the course of the two opinions on this issue handed down on that date, the Justices pointed out that children of a minority group forced to attend segregated public schools were being denied the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment and that they were being deprived of liberty without due process of law in violation of the Fifth Amendment.

The opinion in the case of Brown et al vs. Board of Education of Topeka et al - which challenged the validity of public school segregation in the states - is based on the findings of modern psychology. To separate Negro children, it points out, "from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone." Considerations of this kind, it says, "apply with added force to children in grade and high school."

It further elaborates this point in the following language: "Segregation of white and colored children in public schools has a detrimental effect upon the colored children. The impact is greater when it has the sanction of the law; for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the Negro group. A sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a child to learn. Segregation with the sanction of the law, therefore, has a tendency to retard the educational and mental development of Negro children and to deprive them of some of the benefits they would receive in a racially integrated school system."

"Whatever may have been the extent of psychological knowledge at the time of Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) this finding is amply supported by modern authority. Any language in Plessy v. Ferguson contrary to this finding is rejected."

In regard to the equality or inequality of tangible factors, the issue is clearly stated and squarely met: "We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other 'tangible factors' may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does."

And finally, "We conclude that in the field of public education, the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore we hold that the plaintiffs and other similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment."

The Negro child, the Court held, must be protected from being placed in a situation which creates in him a feeling of inferiority which in turn retards his educational and mental development.

In the case of Bolling v. Sharpe - which challenged the validity of public school segregation in the District of Columbia - the Court ruled that denial to a Negro child of the right to attend a public school on the same basis as any other child was to deprive him of liberty without due process of law.

"Liberty under law extends to the full range of conduct which the individual is free to pursue, and it cannot be restricted except for a proper governmental objective. Segregation in public education is not reasonably related to any proper governmental objective and thus it imposes on Negro children of the District of

Columbia a burden that constitutes an arbitrary deprivation of their liberty in violation of the Due Process Clause."

"We hold that racial segregation in the public schools of the District of Columbia is a denial of the due process of law guaranteed by the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution."

Thus the decisions were based on spiritual and mental rather than physical grounds. They said that though the tangible features of legally segregated public schools for children of a minority group may be equal or even superior, the fact of segregation per se makes them inferior. They affirmed without qualification the constitutional right of all American children to equal protection of the laws and to freedom under the law as far as public school attendance is concerned.

## II. The Board of Education of the City of St. Louis Meets, June 22, 1954.

### Factors Making for Readiness of St. Louis for the Decision.

When the decision was announced, the Board of Education of the City of St. Louis and Boards of Education of a number of other localities in Missouri and elsewhere, immediately began to plan to integrate. On June 17, 1954, one month after the date of the decision, a letter was written each member of the Board by its secretary calling a Special Meeting "for the purpose of considering and acting upon the question of desegregation of the schools operated by said Board in the City of St. Louis, as a result of opinion of the Supreme Court of the United States, in the case of Brown et al vs. Board of Education of Topeka et al". This immediate action of the Board symbolized the readiness of the St. Louis community and the St. Louis Public Schools for the change-over.

A number of factors accounted for this readiness. In the first place, the St. Louis community itself had been experiencing a process of democratization over a period of the past ten years. Some examples of this had

been (a) condemnation of segregation by the Metropolitan Church Federation and application of the principle of integration in its own organization, (b) emphasis in Catholic churches on the fact that segregation was contrary to Christianity and welcoming of Negro members to unsegregated participation in all phases of church life, (c) desegregation of St. Louis University, (d) desegregation of Catholic elementary and high schools, (e) desegregation of Washington University, (f) increasing desegregation of leading hotels of the city, (g) desegregation of St. Louis' largest legitimate theater, (h) considerable desegregation of housing as a result of the Supreme Court's decision that restrictive covenant classes banning sale of property to Negroes were unenforceable in the courts, and (i) considerable desegregation of employment as illustrated by the hiring of numbers of Negro street car and bus operators.

All changes of this kind had received the strong endorsements of both the Protestant and Catholic Churches and were topics of commendatory editorials on the part of the local press. They had also been specific objectives of a number of social agencies. Thus during the past ten years, the St. Louis community has been in the process of rejecting the principle of segregation and adopting the principle of integration. The Supreme Court's decision was therefore consistent with rather than contrary to the pattern of thought and action which had characterized the progress of the city for the past decade.

A second important factor making for readiness to accept the decision is that there had been over this same period increasing integration of public school teachers and principals of St. Louis in the performance of their professional duties and the operation of their professional organizations. For many years courses of study have been written and textbooks selected for the St. Louis Public Schools by integrated committees of teachers and principals;

The city-wide Elementary School Principals Association has always included Negroes in its membership and has during the past few years operated on an integrated basis to a greater extent than previously. As a matter of fact, the present president of this organization happens to be a Negro. Other professional groups, such as the Association for Childhood Education have been more or less completely integrated themselves and active in promoting integration in all professional undertakings.

In 1949, the Missouri State Teachers Association admitted Negro teachers to membership. From that time on, this association, as well as its local subsidiary, has operated on a non-segrated basis. Several years ago, an Intergroup Education Association of teachers and principals - with a present membership of 525 persons - was organized for the purpose of improving the teaching of human relations in the schools. This, of course, was also an integrated group. When the decision came, therefore, the educators of Missouri had already officially rejected the principle of racial segregation in their relationships with one another and were at work implementing the principle of integration in their own ranks.

A third and by no means least important factor which made for readiness to accept and implement the decision on the part of students particularly has been the development over the past ten years of a city-wide human relations program conducted on a scientific basis and under expert leadership. Promotion of wholesome human relations has of course always been a primary concern of good teachers everywhere and various methods of accomplishing this objective have been used with educative results throughout the history of the St. Louis Public Schools. The present systematic approach to the problem dates from the winter of 1944-45, when a curriculum committee on Intercultural Relations was appointed to serve in the social studies area of the Courses of Study Council.----------In May, 1945,

the St. Louis Public School System was invited to become a participating system in an eighteen-city experimental study of intergroup education being made by the American Council on Education. The invitation was accepted and active participation began in November, 1945, with the visit to St. Louis of Dr. Hilda Taba, National Director of the Study, Mr. Herbert Walther, Co-ordinator, and Mr. John Robinson, Consultant. From its inception, Mr. Frank Sskwor, now of the faculty of Harris Teachers College, served as local co-ordinator of the project.

This experiment has grown into a systematic human relations program of far-reaching proportions, the purpose of which has been to discover effective means of promoting goodwill and understanding among the various groups of people living in St. Louis. It has concentrated upon the problem of educating boys and girls to live together co-operatively and with mutual understanding and appreciation of each other. This has been attempted partially by direct projects with boys and girls and partially by helping teachers perfect their skills in teaching human relations. From the curricular point of view, the approach has not been the offering of separate courses in human relations but the introduction of materials and techniques in the various areas of learning - art, literature, music, science, etc. - which would conduce to the improvement of human relations. From the extracurricular point of view, some activities found effective have been auditorium programs presented at one high school by pupils of another; formation of an all-city student council meeting monthly to discuss matters of common interest to all teenagers; an intergroup youth conference sponsored by the National Conference of Christians and Jews in co-operation with public, private, and parochial schools from the city and county, in which one hundred adult leaders from all walks of life have participated as resource people; interracial letter-writing between schools; and interracial

high school athletic events.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the work in this human relations program has been helping teachers acquire skills in assisting pupils to overcome artificial barriers to the acceptance of each individual on his own merits. Well over a hundred St. Louis teachers have attended summer workshops in intergroup education at such places as Washington University, St. Louis University, Harvard, Denver University, Northwestern University, and The University of Chicago, many of them going on scholarships awarded through the National Conference of Christians and Jews. A full-time consultant in human relations has devoted a major portion of his time and energies to helping teachers guide pupils in the art of co-operative living. As has been previously mentioned, an Intergroup Education Association, with a membership of 525 teachers, administrators, and consultants has been formed for the purpose of improving efficiency in this area. This systematic, city-wide program in teaching children the worth and dignity of the individual, which from the point of view of education for good American citizenship it was essential to carry on whether segregation continued or not, has been productive of attitudes and goodwill which greatly facilitated the acceptance and implementation of the Supreme Court's decision. The immediate action of the Board of Education in calling a Special Meeting to consider such implementation, therefore, was symbolic not only of the readiness for integration of the community as a whole and the teaching corps as a whole but of the students as well.

III. The Board of Education Adopts a Program for Integration of the St. Louis Public Schools.

At this meeting of June 22, 1954, the Board - as elected representatives of the St. Louis community - officially and unanimously adopted a program for integration of the schools under its control by steps, to be begun in September, 1954, and completed by September,

1955. A reason for making the transition by steps over the period of a year was that considerable detail work had to be done in regard to such matters as the drawing of new school district boundaries, assignment of teachers and pupils and other personnel, transfer of books and materials, and transmission of information to parents. To do this work properly required time. Another advantage of integrating the system by steps was that a major portion of administrative attention could then be concentrated on the particular schools being integrated at the time they were being integrated, thus making possible a better supervisory job.

This plan, unanimously approved by the Board, provided (a) for integration of colleges and of special schools and classes in September, 1954; (b) for integration of all high schools under the Board's control, except the technical high schools, and integration of the adult education program at the beginning of the second semester, January 31, 1955; and (c) integration of technical high schools and integration of regular elementary schools in September, 1955.

It stipulated that integrated boundary lines for the general high schools be published by November 15, 1954, and for elementary schools by February 1, 1955. Students, under the plan, are required to attend schools according to these boundaries with the exceptions that (a) the proper school authorities may transfer students from one district to another to relieve overcrowding, and (b) students already enrolled in a school but not resident in its new district may, but are not required to, continue at that school until they graduate, provided the school is not overcrowded.

The plan further stipulated (a) that tenure rights of certificated employees will be preserved, (b) that whenever possible, employees will retain their present assignments, being transferred only to meet the needs of the service, (c) that when vacancies occur employees will be assigned to fill them on the basis of the competence

and adaptability of an employee for a particular assignment, (d) that teachers will be appointed from a single rated list on the basis of examination scores, without regard to race or color, (e) that promotions will continue to be made only on the basis of merit, and (f) that vacancies among lunchroom or matron and custodial staff will be filled on the basis of competence and adaptability, that employees in these and other non-certificated classes will be appointed from lists compiled from examination scores, without regard to race or color, and that promotions of such personnel will continue to be made solely on the basis of merit.

The plan thus provided for orderly integration of the schools, minimum interference with the educational programs of students, and maximum protection of the interests of employees and prospective employees.

The Board, in adopting it, made the following statement: "The program we have agreed upon has been prepared without benefit of direction from our state authorities, and it is conceivable that subsequent action by such authorities may dictate some modification of the program. It does, however, represent the best judgment of Board members and school administrators."

On June 30, 1954, Mr. John M. Dalton, Attorney General of the State of Missouri, ruled that provisions of the Missouri Constitution and laws which required the maintenance of separate schools for Negro and white children "are superseded by the decision of the United States Supreme Court and are, therefore, unenforceable." Because of this, he ruled, there are now no valid laws in Missouri which either require or permit segregation of the races in the public schools. This ruling cleared the way for inauguration without modification of the Board's schedule of desegregation.

Both before and after announcement of the plan, many leading organizations of the community volunteered their assistance and

support to the Board in carrying out its program. These included the press, the League of Women Voters, the City-Wide Parent and Patron Organizations and Alliances, the Y.M.C.A., the Y.W.C.A., the N.A.A.C.P., the Urban League, the Metropolitan Church Federation, the Catholic Church, the National Conference of Christians and Jews, the Mayor's Commission on Human Relations, and others. One daily paper endorsed the plan and expressed the hope that the changeover might proceed a little more rapidly than the outlined schedule proposed. The League of Women Voters issued a pamphlet designed to help the public understand and co-operate with what the Board was trying to do. The Metropolitan Church Federation urged all its member churches to devote a portion of their Sunday Services to prayer for the success of public school integration. The Catholic churches of the city urged their parishioners to co-operate fully with the Board of Education in its program of de-segregation. The City-Wide Parent and Patron Organizations and Alliances - both white and Negro - pledged their unqualified support, and worked closely with the Superintendent and with each other to make the transition worthy of the best traditions of the city and system. They also made plans for integration on the city wide parent organization level. The Mayor's Commission on Human Relations conducted a workshop on integration, bringing to the community a number of experts in this area and co-operating closely with the administrative and teaching staff of the public schools. Never has there been a project on which the leadership groups of St. Louis co-operated more unreservedly than they did on this.

IV. The Board of Education Implements Its Program.

In September, 1954, the first step in implementation of this program was taken. This was integration of the colleges and integration of the special schools and classes. Stowe Teachers College and Stowe Junior College had been an institution with a Negro stu-

dent body and a Negro teaching and custodial personnel. Harris Teachers College and Harris Junior College had been an institution with a white student body and a white teaching and custodial personnel. The two were combined into one institution and housed in the Harris College Building, with approximately forty per cent of the student body and faculty Negro and sixty per cent of the student body and faculty white. There was also integration of the clerical personnel and custodial staff.

The transition was made without incident and in an atmosphere of friendliness and goodwill - with all concerned determined to see that it was properly consummated. It was, commented one experienced administrator who observed it at first hand, no different from combining two schools composed of students and teachers of the same race. Much of the credit for the success of this initial step must be attributed to the vigorous democratic leadership which had been developed among the students of both colleges as well as the previously mentioned program of human relations and the high degree of integration attained already by the professional staff. It is significant that the enrollment of the integrated college exceeded the sum of the enrollments of the two separate colleges for the previous year. Whatever may have been the cuases for this, the fact remains that integration did not result in decreased enrollment. Incidentally, the combination released a building for the housing of five hundred elementary school pupils in an area of the city where pupil-teacher ratio was extremely high.

Integration of special schools and classes was carried out in September, 1954, with equal effectiveness. Turner School for Orthopedically Handicapped Children has been an institution with a Negro student body and was staffed with Negro personnel. Michael School for Orthopedically Handicapped Children had been an institution with a white student body and was staffed with white personnel.

The Michael School building was adequate to house the program for all orthopedically handicapped children of the city. The two schools were therefore combined into one and housed in the Michael building. There was complete integration of pupils, teachers, attendants, custodial staff, bus drivers, and therapists. The combination was made without incident and was characterized by a spirit of co-operation on the part of all involved. The two schools for the deaf were similarly integrated. The combination of the schools for the orthopedically handicapped and the combination of the schools for the deaf released desperately needed classroom space for regular elementary school pupils in a densely populated area of the city.

Integration was also quietly but equally successful at the school at Shriners Hospital (where three public school teachers are employed) and at Missouri Hills (formerly Bellefontaine Farms) where socially maladjusted boys are instructed. In the case of classes for mentally retarded pupils, which for the most part are housed in regular elementary school buildings, integrated district lines were drawn and pupils assigned without regard to race. It is worthy of comment that in the five instances in which one Negro pupil attended a special class in a regular elementary school which had not yet been integrated, teachers and principals exercised special care to see that a happy adjustment was made.

Desegregation of the general high schools and desegregation of the adult education program were effected as scheduled on January 31, 1955, at the beginning of the second semester. New high school district boundary lines had been drawn on the basis of building capacity, distance, and transportation facilities. They were announced on November 15, 1954. I.B.M. cards used in outlining them contained no data as to race. Students already enrolled in a school but not resident in its new district were granted the option of continuing to attend that

school or of transferring to the school in the new district of which they resided.

Results of their selections are indicated by the following report on student population of six of the former white high schools on the opening day of the semester:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Soldan-Blewett | - | 350 Negroes out of 1,350 students. |
| McKinley | - | 211 Negroes out of 1,437 students. |
| Beaumont | - | 98 Negroes out of 1,890 students. |
| Central | - | 167 Negroes out of 1,201 students. |
| Cleveland | - | 7 Negroes out of 1,483 students. |
| Roosevelt | - | 29 Negroes out of 1,820 students. |

The number of white and Negro students now enrolled in these six schools is not known, as statistics on student population are no longer kept by race.

Largely due to the location of Sumner and Vashon, the two former Negro general high schools, no white pupils were enrolled at these two schools at the beginning of this semester. For the same reason, no Negro pupils were enrolled at Southwest, a former white high school. One educationally helpful result of the integration was that the crowded conditions which had for many years existed at the former Negro high schools were measureably relieved. The principal of one of them has quoted as saying that for the first time since his building was occupied, there was space to turn around. Because of the reduction in enrollment, a number of teachers from the former Negro high schools were transferred to former white high schools where additional teachers were needed because of increased enrollment.

It was the city-wide plan that each high school principal, in cooperation with his faculty and parent, patron, and student groups should assume the responsibility of working out a democratically desirable program for integration of his school. This was done in a variety of ways. Each high school was organized to welcome its new students and to help them orient themselves as speedily and satis-

factorily as possible. Each elementary school sending students to high school exercised more than usual care to make the transition successful. High schools transferring pupils to other high schools did likewise. Students took over much of the responsibility for making integration work. This they did through such means as participation in auditorium meetings and writing of articles or editorials for school papers.

As a result, the day of integration was outstandingly successful. It was a "natural school day" - characterized by normalcy. The big news of the day was that there was no "news". It was the quiet and undramatic culmination of years of educational programming and democratic practice and the outcome of contributions to the building of goodwill by many diverse community agencies. It was described in an editorial appearing two days later in the New York Times as an example of what a sound community approach to the problem of desegration could accomplish.

Integration of the Board's Adult Education Program - including both day and evening classes - proceeded in the same undramatic but significant way that characterized integration of other divisions of the system. The public was informed that the adult education program was to be integrated as of January 31, 1955, and a number of people took advantage of the convenience and increased opportunities afforded.

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Two steps of St. Louis' three-step schedule for desegregation have thus been taken. One remains. In September, 1955, the third and final step will be made with integration of the regular elementary schools and integration of the technical high schools.

As stipulated in the Boards' plan, integrated elementary school district boundaries which will become effective next September were announced January 30, 1955. These boundaries were drawn taking into account school building capacities, travel distance, and traffic

hazards. I.B.M. cards on the basis of which they were outlined contained no data as to racial identity. As in the case of the general high schools, pupils already enrolled in a school but not resident in its new district will be granted the option of continuing to attend that school provided it is not overcrowded or of transferring to the school in the new district of which they reside.

One highly salutary outcome of this elementary school re-districting will be the elimination of the extremely high pupil-teacher ratio which prevails in certain heavily populated areas in the central part of the city. And while the re-districting will not by any means solve the overall problem of pupil-teacher ratio, it will eliminate glaringly incongrous situations in which pupils living within a few blocks of an underpopulated school travel seven or eight miles across the city to a school with a much higher pupil-room ratio or in which a school the pupil population of which exceeds its normal capacity is within a few blocks of a school with vacant rooms. An immediate result will be to make possible, by the erection of primary branch schools in areas of concentrated population, a greatly improved teacher-pupil ratio and a more equitable distribution of pupils between schools.

Integration of the technical high schools is also scheduled to take place in September, 1955. A new technical high school is now under construction in the southwest part of the city and Hadley - the present technical high school for white students - is being modernized. Upon completion of the new technical high school building, Washington, the present technical high school for Negro students, will be moved to the Hadley building and operated on an integrated basis as a cosmopolitan high school offering technical subjects. This will further ease overpopulation in the high schools in the central part of the city. The new technical high school will also be operated on an integrated basis. The present Washington Technical High School building will be converted

to use as an elementary school, which will afford additional opportunity to reduce class size on the elementary level.

V. Some Anticipated Outcomes of Integration.

Here, then, we have a bare outline of the St. Louis story of public school integration as it has progressed to this time. It is a story of evolving democracy, of closeknit community co-operation, of professional vision on the part of teachers and principals, of wisdom and intelligent planning on the part of the Board of Education, and of a long-term program of educating boys and girls in wholesome human relations. We believe that it will eventuate in St. Louis' becoming a greater and more democratic American community and in its public school system's becoming a more truly efficient servant of such a community. We believe also that the spiritual and intellectual values the importance of which was so strongly emphasized in the Supreme Court's decision - those great intangibles which make life in our democracy so uniquely worthwhile - will be increasingly realized in our system because of this basic change in its organization. And we are thoroughly convinced that from the economic point of view, the community will receive greater value for its tax dollar because of the elimination of unnecessary duplication of facilities, reduction in expenses of transportation, and elimination of waste in classrooms at a time when classrooms are at a premium. Thus the Board of Education will be enabled to devote a larger proportion of its funds to one of its most urgent problems - reduction of class size.